



STAFF REPORT

Planning Commission

CASE #SAP-005-18

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| PC Date: | June 5, 2018 | Case Planner: | Jenny Axmacher |
| CC Date: | June 18, 2018 | | |
| Location: | Irondale Neighborhood, between East 80 th and East 88 th Avenues and the Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad. | | |
| Applicant: | City of Commerce City | Owner: | Various |
| Address: | 7887 E. 60 th Avenue Commerce City, CO 80022 | Address: | |

Case Summary

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|------------------------------|---|
| Request: | Review and approval of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan. |
| Project Description: | The City's goal for this Sub-Area Plan was to create achievable goals and implementation strategies for the overall improvement of Irondale. The City contracted with Ayres Associates to complete the plan and they looked at existing conditions/challenges to create options to determine the future vision for Irondale and then put together steps to bring the vision forward through direct action items. Three neighborhood meetings, three City Council Study Sessions, two Planning Commission Study Sessions, three technical advisory committee meetings and several staff meetings were held to gather feedback and information on each of the major steps in the planning process. The resulting document describing the future vision for Irondale as well as implementation steps for that vision is presented for approval and adoption. |
| Staff Recommendation: | Approval |

Development Review Team Analysis

Introduction/Summary

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan was undertaken in late 2017 with the goal of outlining the existing conditions and upgrades to the roadway, drainage, and utility networks. After completing a request for proposal process, Ayres Associates was chosen to assist the city in the planning process.

The intent of the project is to create a vision for Irondale's future. To that end, the plan process sought answers to key questions on what should remain and where changes and improvements

could be made in the neighborhood. Project steps included research and discussion of the neighborhood today and plans for the growth and development into the future. Four major topics include: roads, drainage, utilities and land use.

The plan prioritizes infrastructure needs to help guide growth and change in the neighborhood in the years to come. Planning for the needs of Irondale in advance will help make sure the right improvements happen in the right order to support the shared vision.

In accordance with the City Charter, the Planning Commission must make a recommendation to City Council regarding adoption of the Plan. The Plan is scheduled for consideration at the June 18, 2018 City Council public hearing.

Why is a Plan Needed?

Irondale is one the City's original communities and was platted in the late 19th Century. Irondale was intended to be a residential community surrounding the Kibler Stove Works Foundry. Unfortunately, the Foundry closed a few years after it was opened and the neighborhood was primarily used for agriculture purposes until the 1950s. In the 1950s, the neighborhood saw some development of single-family residential homes, but that soon gave way to industrial development. With the construction of State Highway 2, State Highway 85, Interstate 76, and the continued presence of the railroads, the neighborhood has been attracting industrial development since the 1970s.

However, Irondale lacks the necessary infrastructure to support industrial development and this has led to the underutilization of land in the Irondale Neighborhood. Also contributing to the challenges of the Irondale Neighborhood is that it is a mix of properties that have not been annexed and are governed by Adams County and properties that have been annexed and are governed by Commerce City. This leads to patchwork development and inconsistent land uses.

Additionally, the street network in Irondale is disconnected, unimproved, and difficult to navigate. The existing street network makes development difficult because often times there is inadequate right-of-way, the roads are in disrepair, and the roads do not have adequate utility connections. These issues are left to the development community to address, which increases the cost of development. Irondale also faces drainage challenges.

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan provides achievable goals for the neighborhood to address these issues and implementation strategies for the overall improvement of Irondale.

What is a Sub-Area Plan?

Simply put, a Sub-Area Plan is:

- A guide for the management of change in a particular area,
- A reflection of community values and aspirations for select neighborhoods,
- The foundation for policies, strategies, and actions within the area,
- The neighborhood's to-do list, and
- A catalyst for community consensus.

More specifically, the purpose of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan is to set forth the vision and goals of the study area to help guide development and infrastructure investment decisions. It sets the stage for development regulations, and ongoing decision-making and guides the city in funding programs and capital investments.

It is a plan for the future, but also addresses immediate needs. It is designed to guide the growth and development of this area of the city and recommend programs and directions for services and infrastructure. It establishes a policy framework for the city to help evaluate choices the neighborhood faces and guide decisions on development proposals. In accordance with state statutes, the plan is an advisory document that sets the policy foundation for the city's decision-making process and regulatory framework. It is not zoning and does not dictate mandatory regulations.

How This Plan Helps Commerce City

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan functions as a specialized comprehensive plan for this specific area of Commerce City. It creates a vision for the neighborhood and spells out the steps and actions the city needs to take to help Irondale reach its desired destination.

The Plan will help the city determine where it should make strategic investments such as road and infrastructure improvements. It will guide future development and redevelopment efforts so they are of quality design and contribute to improving the city's image. The Plan also will point the city in the right direction so that it can actively recruit new businesses and economic development opportunities. It will help the community become more sustainable, balancing commerce and the economy with the local context and environment, and with the community needs. Finally, it will educate future residents and businesses by communicating where the city is "headed," enabling it to play a larger role in regional issues.

Planning Commission's Role with the Comprehensive Plan

According to Colorado State Law, authority for municipal Comprehensive Plans is given to Planning Commissions. The City Charter, in accordance with Section 10.3, supports this, by stating that the Planning Commission shall "make, amend, and add to the Master Plan for the physical development of the city." This master plan is identified in Section 10.7, which describes it as, "The Master Plan for the physical development of the city, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive and explanatory matter, shall show the Planning Commission's recommendations for the development of the city and may include, among other things:

- The general location, character, and extent of streets, bridges, parks, waterways, and other public ways, grounds and space.
- The general location of public buildings and other public property.
- The general location and extent of public utilities, whether publicly or privately owned.
- The removal, relocation, widening, extension, narrowing, vacating, abandonment,

acquisition or change of use, of existing or future public ways.

- The general extent and location of public housing projects and slum clearing projects."

Simply stated, the Planning Commission is charged with overseeing the plan process and framework. They will make a recommendation regarding the adoption of this document, and City Council will have final approval authority.

Process

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan process was divided into three different phases or tasks. They are as follows:

1. Discover – a look at existing conditions and challenges.
2. Explore + Assess – working with the community and stakeholders, review and weigh the options to determine the best fit for Irondale
3. Implementation – putting together the steps to bring the vision forward through district action items.

Outreach

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan has had one of the highest rates of participation and attendance for neighborhood meetings of any plan produced within the city. The outreach approach was one where mailings notified business owners and residents about the open house events used to present the plan and gather feedback. 83 unique issues were identified at the first open house alone! Altogether, over 50 people attended each of the neighborhood meetings to voice input and give ideas that helped to shape the plan.

Overall, there were three neighborhood meetings, three City Council Study Sessions, two Planning Commission Study Sessions, three technical advisory committee meetings and several staff meetings held to gather feedback and information on each of the major steps in the planning process. Additional information about the outreach process can be found in Appendix A of the plan, including summaries of each meeting.

Planning Framework

The plan framework assessed four primary issues in the Irondale Neighborhood: Land Use, Roads, Drainage, and Utilities. The ideas for the plan are a direct result of gathering input and analyzing options based on feedback from many sources, including the Planning Commission and City Council study sessions, direct community involvement, and key stakeholder responses. The resulting vision has grown out of numerous public discussions and exercises where the community has described the ideal future vision for the Irondale Neighborhood.

Specific discussion topics in the plan include:

1. Land Use—Recommended Future Land Use Plan
2. Capital Improvement—Discussion of priority infrastructure investments
3. Drainage—A policy approach balancing best practices with fiscal realities
4. Policies—Ideas to explore further to streamline implementation

Organization of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan

The Plan opens with a general history, background, and context/existing conditions of the area and then transitions into the vision, followed by the specific planning framework and infrastructure improvements, before concluding with specific recommendations for Plan Implementation. It is organized as follows:

- **Executive Summary:** Summarizes the Plan and provides an overview of the overall project process and outcomes.
- **Discover:** Explains the Plan's background and purpose, identifies related planning efforts and documents.
 - **Roads Snapshot:** A look at existing conditions and challenges for roads.
 - **Land Use Snapshot:** A look at existing conditions and challenges for land use within the neighborhood.
 - **Drainage Snapshot:** A look at existing conditions and challenges for drainage in the area.
 - **Utilities Snapshot:** A look at existing conditions and challenges for utilities.
- **Explore & Assess:** Reviews and weighs the options for the future vision on the neighborhood to determine the best fit for Irondale.
 - **Key Perspectives:** The key perspectives highlight input from the public meetings, key stakeholders, and public officials during the Explore & Assess stage of the project.
 - **Land Use:** Develops alternative scenarios and determines a preferred vision.
 - **Roads:** Develops alternatives for the buildout of the roadway network and determines a preferred vision.
 - **Drainage:** Develops alternative scenarios and determines a preferred method for drainage improvements.
- **Implementation:** Bridging the gap between the existing neighborhood, future development, and interests of the Irondale community, this section identifies steps to incremental changes, including policies and capital improvements.
 - **Future Land Use:** Recommended Future Land Use Plan
 - **Capital Improvements:** Discussion of priority infrastructure investments including roadways and utilities.
 - **Drainage Recommendations:** A policy approach balancing best practices with fiscal realities.
 - **Financial Considerations:** Outlines a few of the different options for funding the improvements recommended as part of the plan.
 - **Next Steps to Explore:** Ideas to consider to further streamline implementation

Plan Summary Description

The future vision for the Irondale Neighborhood emphasizes a transition of land uses to reduce conflict, direction on drainage improvements needed and coordinated infrastructure investment. The vision is spelled out using the four main plan issues of Land Use, Roads, Drainage, and Utilities. Illustrated on the "Future Land Use Map" and "Capital Improvement Program Recommendations Map" pages of the plan, the maps depict ideal land uses and priority improvements that are proposed for implementation.

Some of the summary concepts for the different issues are listed below:

Land Use:

1. Land use transitions to more industrial uses to reflect the development trends in the area as well as ownership with Union Pacific buying up properties in one of the residential areas.
2. Goal of reducing impacts and conflicts between land uses.
3. Preserves and buffers area that received the most feedback from the neighborhood meetings about remaining agricultural/residential in nature.

Roads:

1. Identifies key projects.
2. Suggests coordination to ensure greatest cost-benefit.
3. Distinguishes between quick wins, or lower cost, shorter timeframe projects and long haul projects that require more investment.

Drainage:

1. Weighs pros and cons of Regional versus Local solutions.
2. Recommends the Regional solution while understanding there are tremendous costs associated.
3. Proposes an interim solution until the funds are raised to implement the regional plan.

Utilities:

1. Identifies key projects, mostly related to accommodating utilizes across future rail expansion areas.
2. Suggests coordination to ensure greatest cost-benefit.

Financing Strategies:

1. Capital Improvement Preservation Plan (CIPP)
2. Special Improvement District (SID)
3. Urban Renewal Authority (URA) &/or Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
4. Development-Driven Impact Fees
5. Grant Assistance

Implementation of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan

How will the city take action?

The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan is a vision plan and a policy document that will guide decision-making within this area of the city. While it contains many long-term and seemingly far-reaching goals, and ideals, it also needs to be achievable. The final chapter explains how Commerce City will begin to implement the Plan, once adopted, through:

- An updated Future Land Use Plan, providing direction for zone changes within the area.
- Identification of key infrastructure investments for both the near and long term with rough cost estimates.
- Relating proposed improvements within the Irondale Neighborhood to Council Work Plan Goals.

Commerce City will implement this Plan using several different approaches including:

- Policy Decisions (day-to-day decision, usually by the Planning Commission or City Council),
- Land Development Code (LDC) Amendments (Adjustments to the LDC to make it easier to accomplish plan goals),
- Partnerships and Intergovernmental Agreements (with neighboring entities, such as Adams County or Urban Drainage and Flood Control), and
- Infrastructure Assessment/ Improvements.

Timing of Actions:

The infrastructure improvement recommendations are divided between quick wins, or lower cost/shorter timeline projects and long haul projects that will require more investment. Specific timelines for improvements will depend primarily on funding availability as well as work plan prioritization.

Comprehensive Plan

The DRT recommendation for this case is supported by the following Comprehensive Plan Goals:

| <u>Section</u> | <u>Goal</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|------------------|---|--|
| Land Use | LU 4.2 | Historic City and Irondale Industrial Areas Strengthened - Promote and strengthen industry and jobs where they are currently located in the Historic City and Irondale |
| <u>Analysis:</u> | The Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan points the City in the right direction to achieve this goal. | |
| <u>Section</u> | <u>Goal</u> | <u>Description</u> |
| Land Use | LU 4.3 | Irondale New Employment/Business Center -Promote and strengthen land for employment in the area |
| <u>Analysis:</u> | The plan also furthers this goal by expanding industrial and commercial land uses in the future land use plan for the area. | |
| <u>Section</u> | <u>Goal</u> | <u>Description</u> |
| Land Use | LU 5a | Develop sub-area plans for areas in need of more detailed planning |
| <u>Analysis:</u> | The creation of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan is supported by the Comprehensive Plan. | |

Irondale is listed in the Comprehensive Plan as strategic planning focus area. The plan identifies issues facing Irondale that need to be addressed including land use inconsistencies, image, enclaves, stormwater (drainage) and (street) connections. All of these items are addressed in the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan.

Development Review Team Recommendation

Based upon the analysis above, the Development Review Team is recommending that the Planning Commission forward the adoption of the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan to City Council with a favorable recommendation.

Recommended Motion

To recommend approval:

I move that the Planning Commission recommend that City Council adopt the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan contained in case SAP-005-18, a copy of which is on file with the city.

Alternative Motions

To recommend approval subject to condition(s):

I move that the Planning Commission recommend that City Council adopt the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan, contained in case SAP-005-18, a copy of which is on file with the city; subject to the following conditions:

Insert Condition(s)

To recommend denial:

I move that the Planning Commission recommend that City Council not adopt the Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan contained in case SAP-005-18 based on the following criteria which the plan does not meet:

List the criteria not met

To continue the case:

I move that the Planning Commission continue the requested Sub-Area Plan contained in case SAP-005-18 to a future Planning Commission agenda.